FIRST
COMICS
OCT
1987 / NO. 12
$1.75 / $2.45
CANADA
DYNAMO
JOE
™

WHO ARE THESE GUYS, ANYWAY?

It is a new age, more than a thousand years hence, yet human nature has changed little. The forces and conditions that have bred wars in the centuries gone by now breed a different kind of war, a new breed of warrior. One of these new warriors is the robosoldier **Dynamo Joe**. This is his story.

Only three civilizations exist in our spiral of the galaxy, the greatest being the **Terran Confederation**, centered on Earth. The galaxy is shared with the cat-like **Tavitans**, and a benign master race, the **Imperium**.

The two man crew of **Dynamo Joe** consists of:

1) **Sergeant Elanian Daro**: citizen of the Imperium.

2) **Private Pomru**: a young Tavitan out to see the Universe.

Ten years before the start of this story, the planets at the Galactic rim fell under attack by a bizarre extra-galactic enemy called the **Mellenares** — millions of microscopic organ - isms linked together to form a single group consciousness, and possessing the ability to read minds. The foe moves at sub-light speeds, in an obsessive straight-line, devour - ing planets in its path.

LAST ISSUE: The Mellenares learn very quickly, and they learned how to travel in hyperspace just in time to encounter **Admiral Shimamura's** forces there. Shimamura managed to draw the Mellenares back into regular space, and now the the enemy is trapped between the main alliance forces and **General Ippolitov** at the Kirschner Belt.

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DYNAMO JOE™ Vol. 1, No.12, October 1987. Published by FIRST COMICS, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 435 N. LaSalle, Chicago IL 60610. Published monthly.

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Price $1.75 in the U.S. Subscription rates for twelve issues: $21.00 in the U.S., $23.00 in Canada, and $40.00 foreign rate. All payments must be in U.S. funds. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this publication are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, without satiric content are intended or should be inferred. Ya build sixty tons, and wadda ya get...Dynamo Joe, Daro, Pomru and all prominent characters featured in this issue are trademarks of First Comics, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to **Dynamo Joe** , c/o First Comics, Inc., 435 N. LaSalle, Chicago IL 60610.

A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

DYNAMO JOE
THE MELLENARES' ATTEMPT TO SNEAK PAST THE ALLIANCE FORCES, UTILIZING THEIR RECENTLY ACQUIRED ABILITY TO TRAVEL IN HYPERSPACE, HAS BEEN DETECTED AND FOILED.
DROPPING BACK INTO 'STEIN SPACE, THE MASSIVE CENTRAL CORE INTELLIGENCE, PROTECTED BY A KILO-METER THICK SHEATH OF MELLENRES' FIGHTERS, RETREATS AT IT'S USUAL SUB-LIGHT SPEED.
IN HOT PURSUIT IS ADMIRAL SHIMA-MURA'S FORCES, CONSISTING OF THE MAIN ALLIANCE FLEET, ALONG WITH ITS NEW MOBILE SUPER-FORTRESS--DELTA BASE.
END RUN
LYING IN WAIT IN THE PATH OF THE RETREATING MELLENARES IS GENERAL IPPOLITOV AND HIS FORCES MANNING THE KIRCHNER-BELT--AN ARTIFICIAL ASTEROID FIELD DESIGNED TO STOP THE MELLENARES ADVANCE INTO OUR GALAXY.
ALTHOUGH THEY MANAGED TO CIRCUMVENT IT GOING IN, THE BELT WILL MOST EFFECTIVELY BLOCK THEIR ESCAPE!
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COLORIST - RICK TAYLOR
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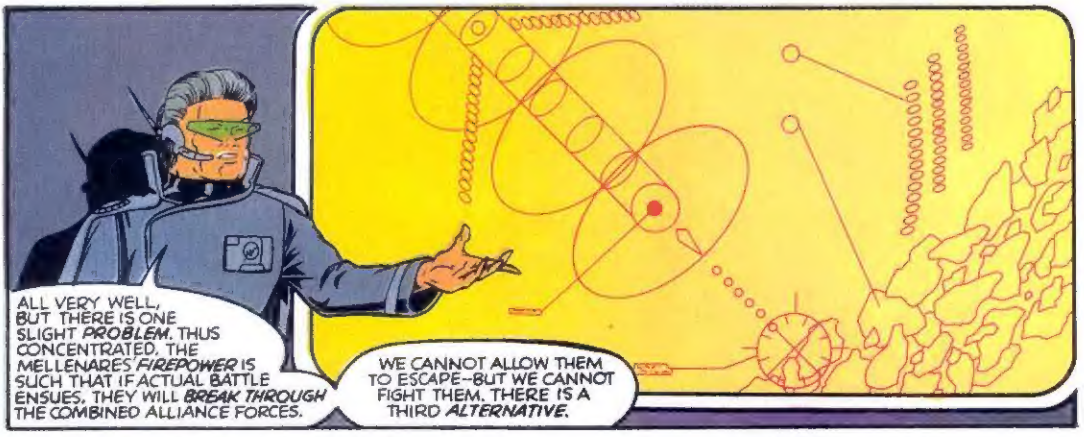
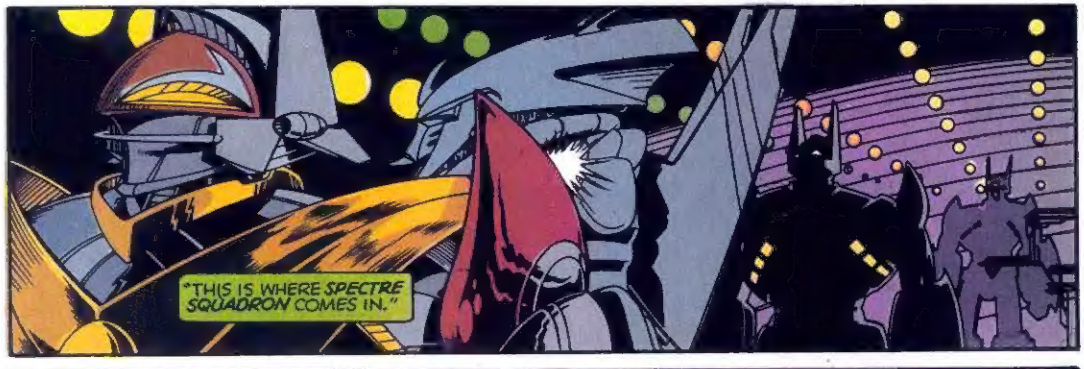
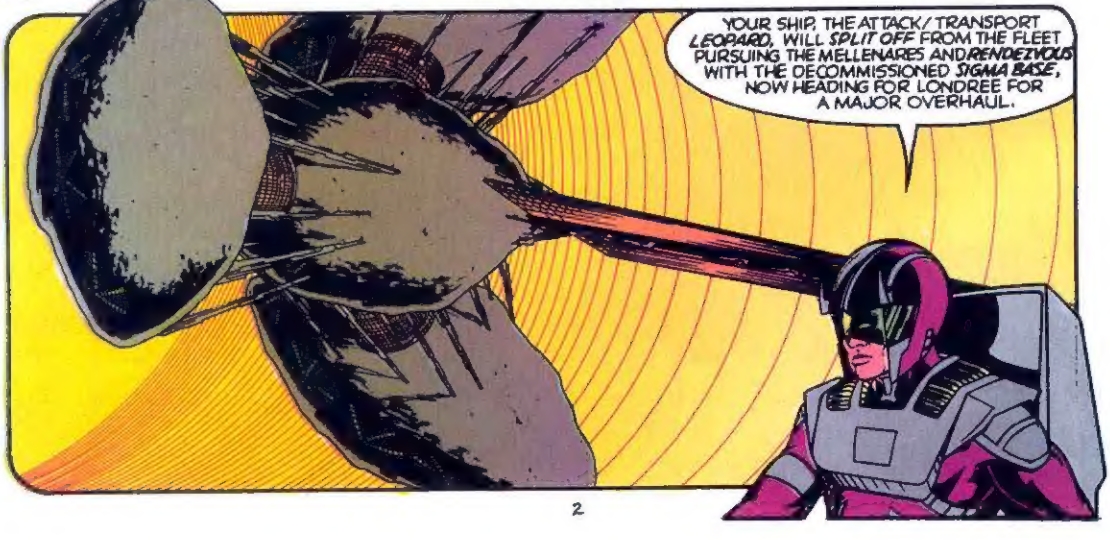
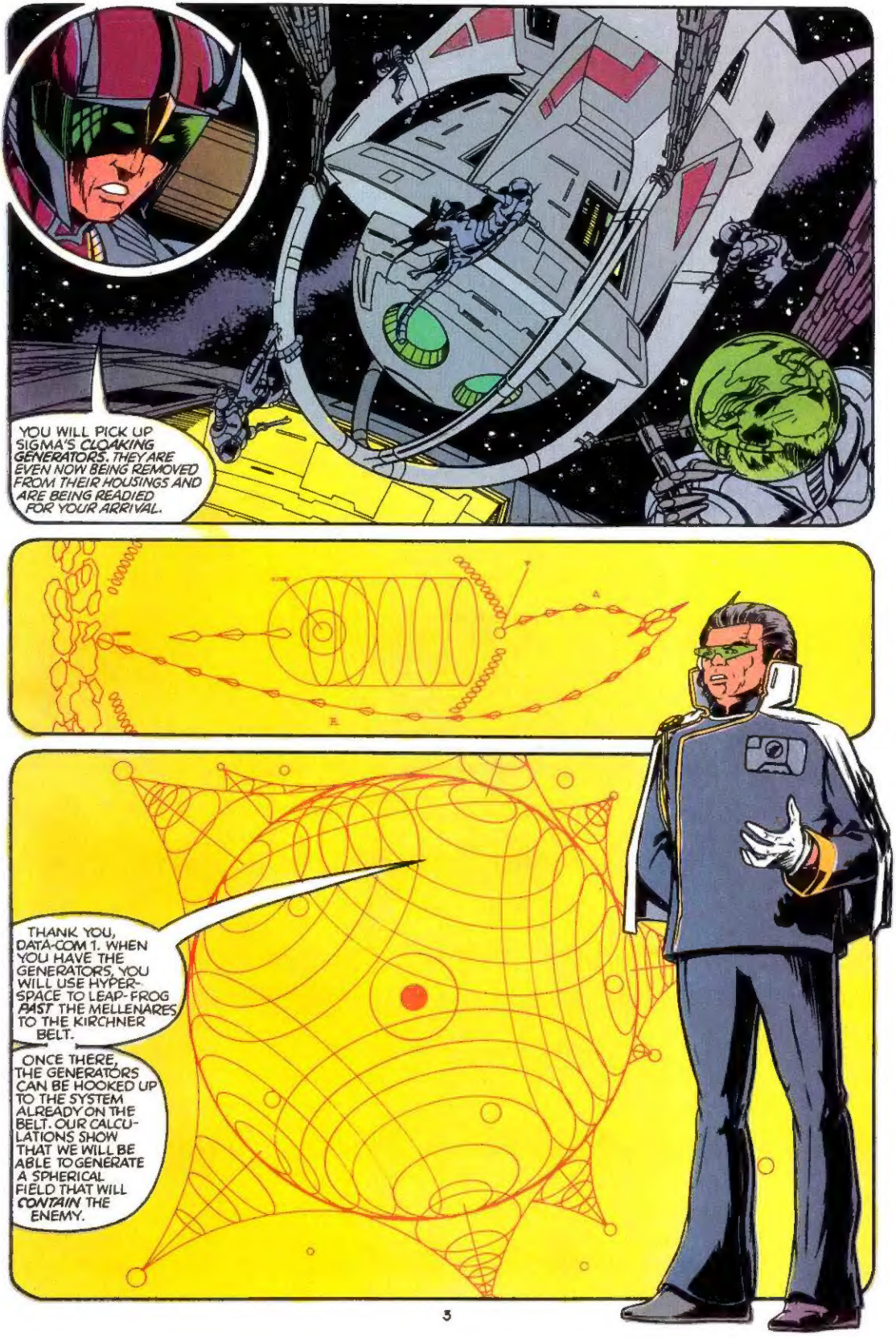
Grundy was here...


ALL VERY WELL, BUT THERE IS ONE SLIGHT *PROBLEM*. THUS CONCENTRATED, THE MELLENARES' *FIREPOWER* IS SUCH THAT IF ACTUAL BATTLE ENSUES, THEY WILL *BREAK THROUGH* THE COMBINED ALLIANCE FORCES.
WE CANNOT ALLOW THEM TO ESCAPE--BUT WE CANNOT FIGHT THEM. THERE IS A THIRD *ALTERNATIVE*.


"THIS IS WHERE *SPECTRE SQUADRON* COMES IN."


YOUR SHIP, THE ATTACK/TRANSPORT *LEOPARD*, WILL *SPLIT OFF* FROM THE FLEET PURSUING THE MELLENARES AND *RENDEZVOUS* WITH THE DECOMMISSIONED *SIGMA BASE*, NOW HEADING FOR LONDREE FOR A MAJOR OVERHAUL.


YOU WILL PICK UP SIGMA'S *CLOAKING GENERATORS*. THEY ARE EVEN NOW BEING REMOVED FROM THEIR HOUSINGS AND ARE BEING READIED FOR YOUR ARRIVAL.
THANK YOU, DATA-COM 1. WHEN YOU HAVE THE GENERATORS, YOU WILL USE HYPER-SPACE TO LEAP-FROG *PAST* THE MELLENARES TO THE KIRCHNER BELT.
ONCE THERE, THE GENERATORS CAN BE HOOKED UP TO THE SYSTEM ALREADY ON THE BELT. OUR CALCULATIONS SHOW THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO GENERATE A SPHERICAL FIELD THAT WILL *CONTAIN* THE ENEMY.

UMPH!
PFFT!
WOOMPFF!
YAWP!
HEN YEH!
STOP! WAIT!!! IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! I SET OFF ONE OF WOLF-1'S SECURITY SYSTEMS!
HOW DID YOU DO THAT?
WELL... I WAS TRYIN' TO GET INSIDE IT.
BRAVE.. BUT STUPID! IF VAUTRAVERS HAD CAUGHT YOU...
I FIGURED HE'D BE AT THE ADMIRAL'S BRIEFING!
THAT JUST ENDED-- WE'RE MOVING OUT!
SO YOU'RE TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW WOLF-1 RUNS, eh? THIS IS A SUBJECT I ALSO FIND INTERESTING.
WHAT YOU NEED, TAVITAN, IS A PARTNER!
YOU?! GIVE ME A STATION-BREAK!

AND WHO BETTER? I AM CAPTAIN OF THE LEOPARD--MY MONITORS CAN TELL YOU WHERE VAUTRAVERS IS AT ANY TIME.
I DON'T TRUST YOU, TANAMARA. IF YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD, YOU'D STEAL WOLF-1 AND GO OVER TO THE SLAVERS TOMORROW!
WELL, SINCE YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT YOU CAN'T TRUST ME, THEN I WON'T BE ABLE TO CATCH YOU BY SURPRISE.
HEH HEH
YOU NEED MY HELP, TAVITAN. PARTNERS?
OKAY...
ON ONE CONDITION.
THAT BEING?
YOU LEAVE THE SARGE ALONE. YOU'RE TROUBLE HE DON'T NEED.
HO! YOU DON'T THINK HIM CAPABLE OF MAKING HIS OWN DECISIONS?
TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT.
VERY WELL, PRIVATE. I AGREE... FOR NOW.
AND I FIND YOUR FAITH IN MY ABILITIES MOST ENCOURAGING.

AND SO, AFTER AN UNEVENTFUL TRIP...
SIGMA--THIS IS ATTACK/TRANSPORT LEOPARD REQUESTING DOCKING INSTRUCTIONS.
WE READ YOU, LEOPARD. YOUR CARGO IS READY AT BAY #345.
THE WORK GOES QUICKLY, AND SOON...
ROGER, SWEETUMS. CAPTAIN TANAMARA, WE ARE BEGINNING FINAL LOADING PROCEDURES.
THESE ARE THE LAST COMPONENTS, SARGE.
THANK YOU, OVERSERGEANT. WE ARE BEGINNING HYPERDRIVE ACTIVATION SEQUENCE AND WILL INITIATE AS SOON AS SPECTRE SQUADRON IS SECURED.
YOU HEARD HER, GENTLEMEN, LET'S WRAP IT UP.
HAVE FUN, PRIVATE.
CATCH YOU LATER, SARGE-- THEY PUT ME ON THE TECHNO-SQUAD WHAT'S SUPPOSED T'GET THE GENERATORS RE-ALIGNED BEFORE WE GET BACK TO THE BELT.
SPECTRE SQUADRON, MAINTAIN BATTLE READINESS. IT'LL BE A LITTLE CLOSE WHEN WE HIT THE BELT.

WE BE ENTERING WARP, CAPTAIN--ALL SYSTEMS GREEN.
THANK YOU, Mr. JONES. SERGEANT WYRD, WHAT'S OUR E.T.A. TO THE KIRCHNER BELT?
34 MINUTES, CAPTAIN.
WE SEEM TO BE...
MREEEE!
MREEEE!
MREEEE!
MREEEE!
SKUPPER AND FLAY ME! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!
STATUS REPORT!
WE'RE GETTING OUTSIDE ENERGY READINGS, CAPTAIN, BUT YOU DON'T GET OUTSIDE ENERGY READINGS IN HYPERSPACE!
YAAAAAA-FFFF!!
ODD'S BLOOD! WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT ANIMAL?!
SPIT'S A SENSITIVE! HE REACTS THAT WAY ONLY TO GREAT DANGER--BUT WHAT COULD...
OH NO!

TAVITANS!! THIS IS THE CAPTAIN! CAN WE ACTIVATE THE CLOAKING GENERATOR? THERE ARE...
WE KNOW! WE ALREADY TRIED! BUT THE LEOPARD DOESN'T HAVE A BIG ENOUGH POWER SUPPLY!
THIS IS DARO--WHAT'S WRONG, CAPTAIN?
I BELIEVE THAT THE MELLENARES ARE ATTEMPTING TO SLIP THROUGH HYPERSPACE AGAIN. IF SO, THEN ALL OF THIS IS FOR NOTHING! WE CAN'T TOUCH THEM!
WRONG AGAIN, LITTLE LADY. ME AN' WOLF-1 CAN HANDLE 'EM.
YOU DIDN'T ASK.
WE WEREN'T TOLD THAT WOLF-1 COULD FIGHT IN HYPER-SPACE.
BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
Heh. YOU FORGET--WOLF AN' ME, WE LIKE T'DO THREE IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEFORE BREAKFAST!
LIKE AH TOLD YA BEFORE, DON'T UNDERESTIMATE WOLF-1.

BUT CAN YOU HANDLE THEM ALONE?
Oh, DON'T WORRY 'BOUT ME, SERGEANT.
WORRY 'BOUT YERSELF!
WHAT?!
CUZ YER COMIN' WITH ME.
BOOSH!!
IF Y'GOT THE NERVE. THANKS T'THE OMNI-LINK HERE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO OPERATE IN HYPERSPACE YERSELF. GAME?
I AM, COLONEL-- BUT I NEED SOMEONE ELSE TO HELP ME RUN THE SUIT.
NOT ANY MORE! A BATTLE LIKE THIS COMES BUT ONCE IN A LIFETIME! SERGEANT WYRD--YOU HAVE THE BRIDGE!

SOON...
IT DIDN'T TAKE THE TECHNOS LONG TO OVERRIDE THE HATCHES SO THEY COULD OPEN WHILE IN HYPERSPACE.
YOU FOLKS BETTER BRACE YERSELVES.
OUTER HATCH SEALS OPENING...
WE ARE READY, COLONEL. THE LEOPARD WILL PROCEED ON WITHOUT US.
BY THE KHAN!!

WHAT... WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
INTERNAL STABILIZERS HAVE NOTHING TO ALIGN THEMSELVES WITH!
RELAX-- THIS PLACE DOES THAT TO EVERYBODY THE FIRST TIME.

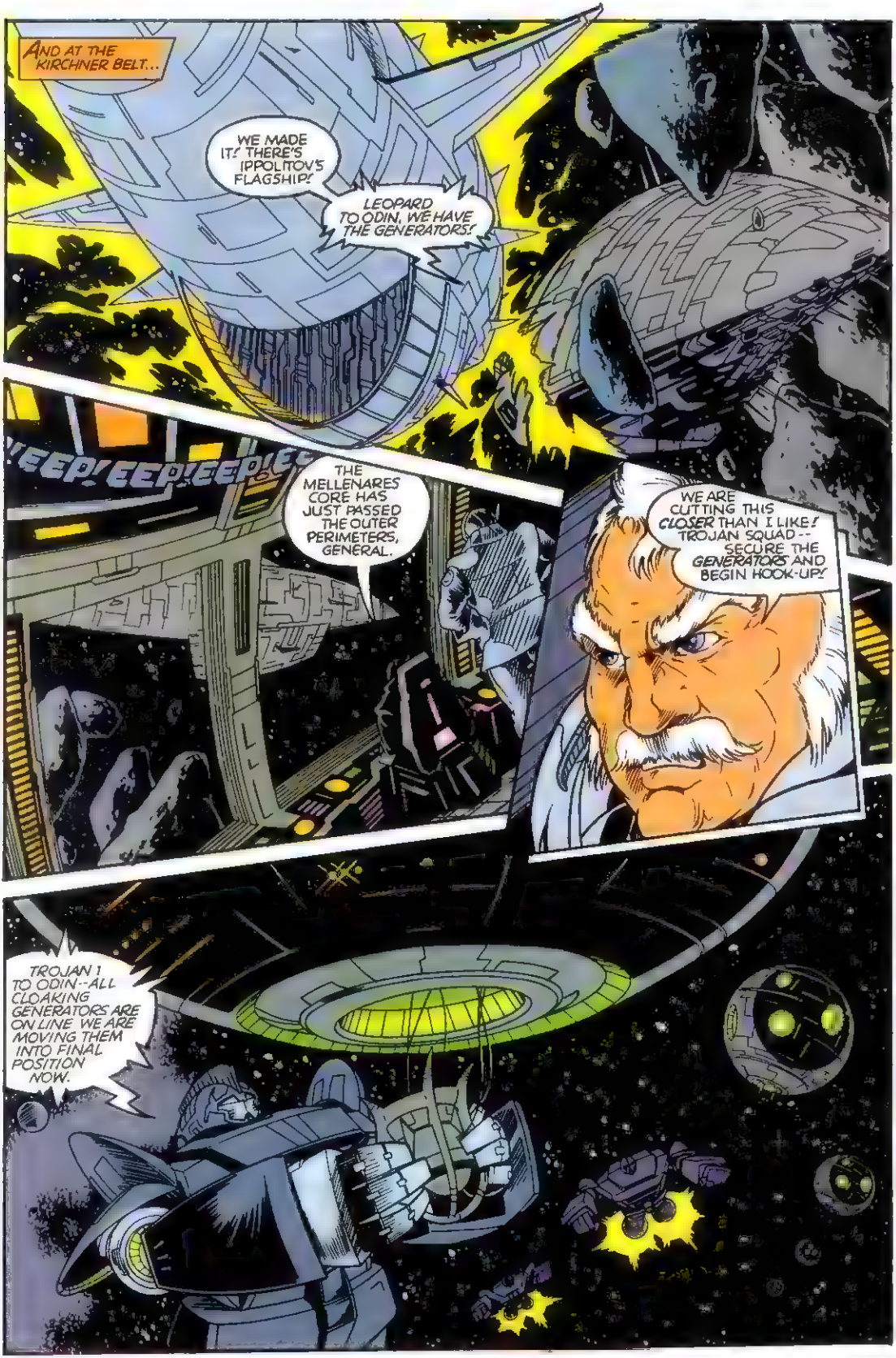
HOW... HOW LONG BEFORE YOU... GET USED TO IT?
A-HEH--IF I EVER DO, I'LL LET YA' KNOW.
BOOP! BOOP! BOOP!
Uh-oh, HERE COME THE BUGS, AND THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE!
I LIKE A MAN WHO ENJOYS HIS WORK!
BRING THEM DEATH!
AS LONG AS WE'RE NOT A PART OF IT. LET'S COVER HIS BACK.
MANITOU PROTECT US! THERE MUST BE HUNDREDS OF THEM!
YES! ISN'T IT GLORIOUS?!

BUT WE CAN'T COVER THEM ALL, VAUTRAVERS!! LOOK OUT!
WHAT?! WHERE?!
OUT OF THE SEETHING MATHEMATICAL MAELSTROM IT DROPS...
DEAD ON TARGET!
WOLF!
COLONEL!
WHAT DARES?! DEATH TO IT!! DEATH!!!
IT IS TAPPED DIRECTLY...INTO POWER GANGLION... CAN'T FOCUS... INTERFERING... HELP!
Uh-oh, LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN TROUBLE!
YOU MUST! I NEED MY FULL CONCENTRATION FOR JUST...
DARO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! I CAN'T HOLD THEM OFF MYSELF!

NICE PIECE A SHOOTIN', SERGEANT.
ANY LONGER AND WOLF 1'S SYSTEMS MIGHTA' COLLAPSED.
...ONE SHOT?
I THINK IT'S TIME WE MOVED ON.
WE'VE GOT TO BUY THE LEOPARD AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE!
NO. WE CANNOT STAY. DAMAGE IS TOO GREAT!

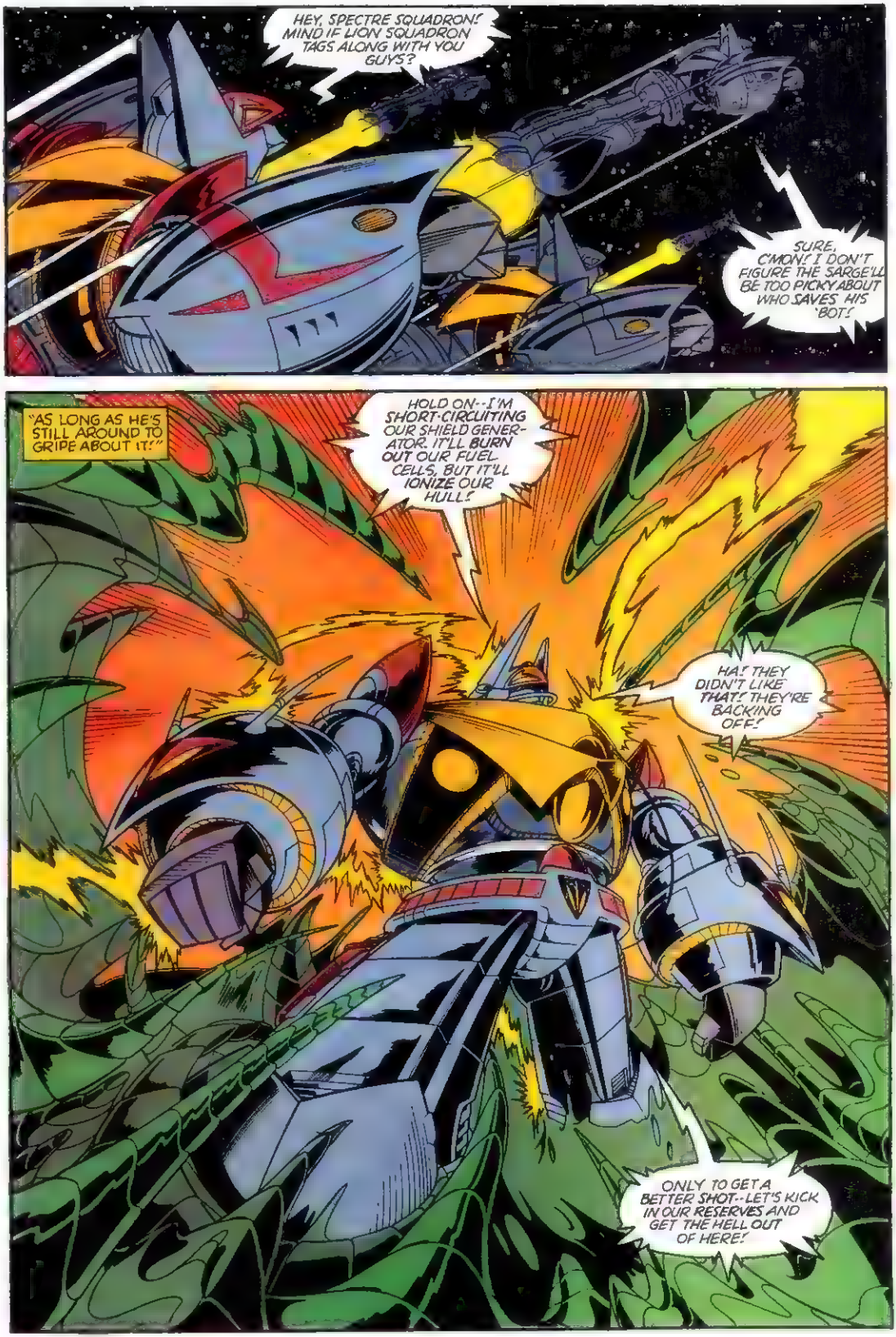
BUT THE MELLENARES CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE!
THEY WILL NOT ESCAPE. NO MORE HUNTING GAMES... THEIR DEATH IS NEEDED...
NOW!
LOOKIT 'EM GO!

THE MELLENARES... THEY'RE GONE!
YOU'VE MORE THAN EARNED YOUR REST, COLONEL.
COME ON, WOLF, LET'S GET YOU HOME. YOU'VE HAD A BUSY DAY.
AAHHHHH... DEATH!
HE WAS PLAYING WITH THEM... LIKE A CAT WITH A MOUSE... COULD THE SUIT BE TOO POWERFUL? BAH! WHAT AM I THINKING?! WOLF-1 IS POWER TO BE USED! NOTHING ELSE!
THAT LAST SHOT DID IT FOR US, SERGEANT-- WOLF'S GONE INTO AUTOMATIC SHUTDOWN TO EFFECT REPAIRS.

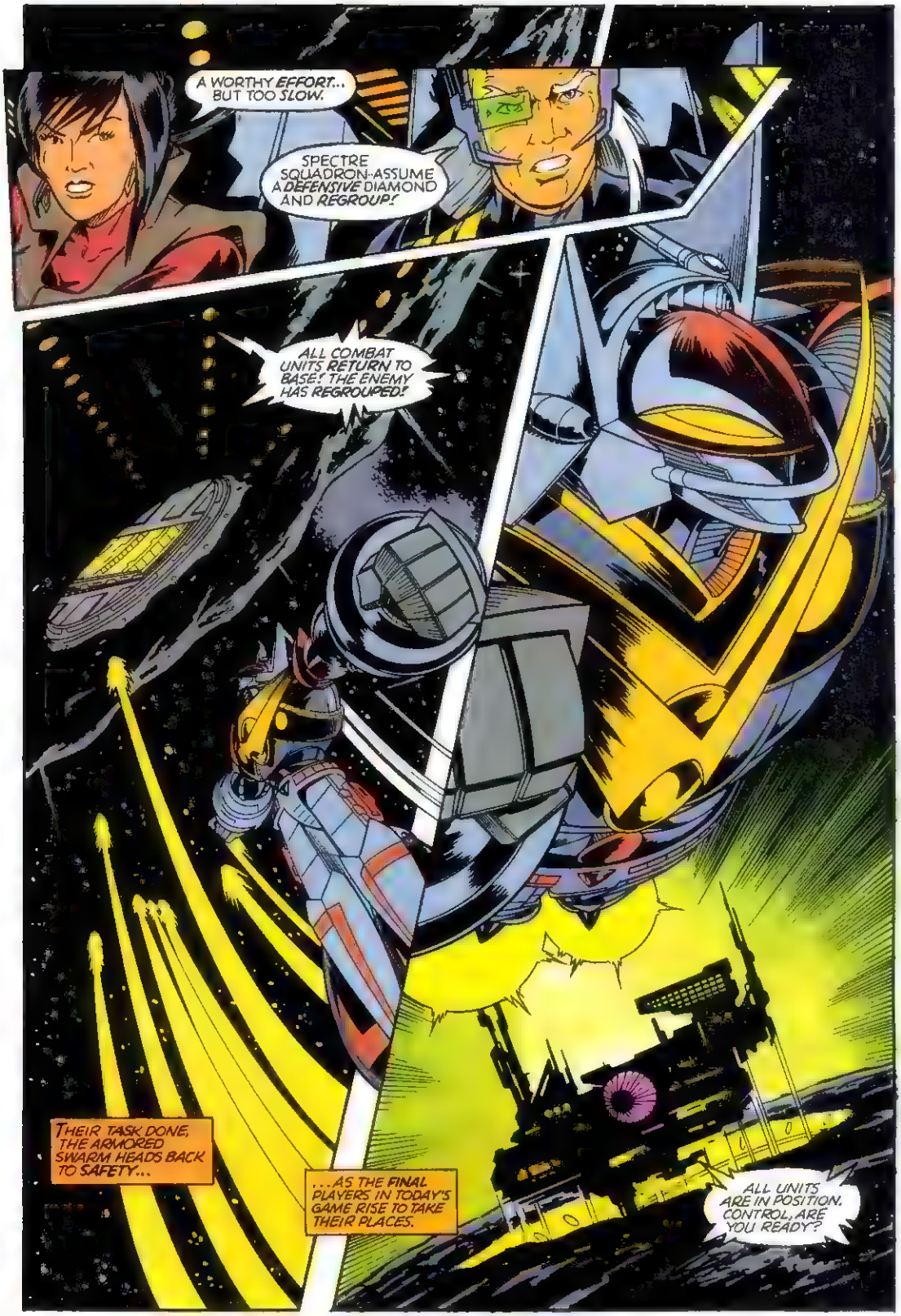

AND AT THE KIRCHNER BELT...
WE MADE IT! THERE'S IPPOLITOV'S FLAGSHIP!
LEOPARD TO ODIN, WE HAVE THE GENERATORS!
EEP! EEP! EEP! EEP!
THE MELLENARES CORE HAS JUST PASSED THE OUTER PERIMETERS, GENERAL.
WE ARE CUTTING THIS CLOSER THAN I LIKE! TROJAN SQUAD -- SECURE THE GENERATORS AND BEGIN HOOK-UP!
TROJAN 1 TO ODIN--ALL CLOAKING GENERATORS ARE ON LINE WE ARE MOVING THEM INTO FINAL POSITION NOW.

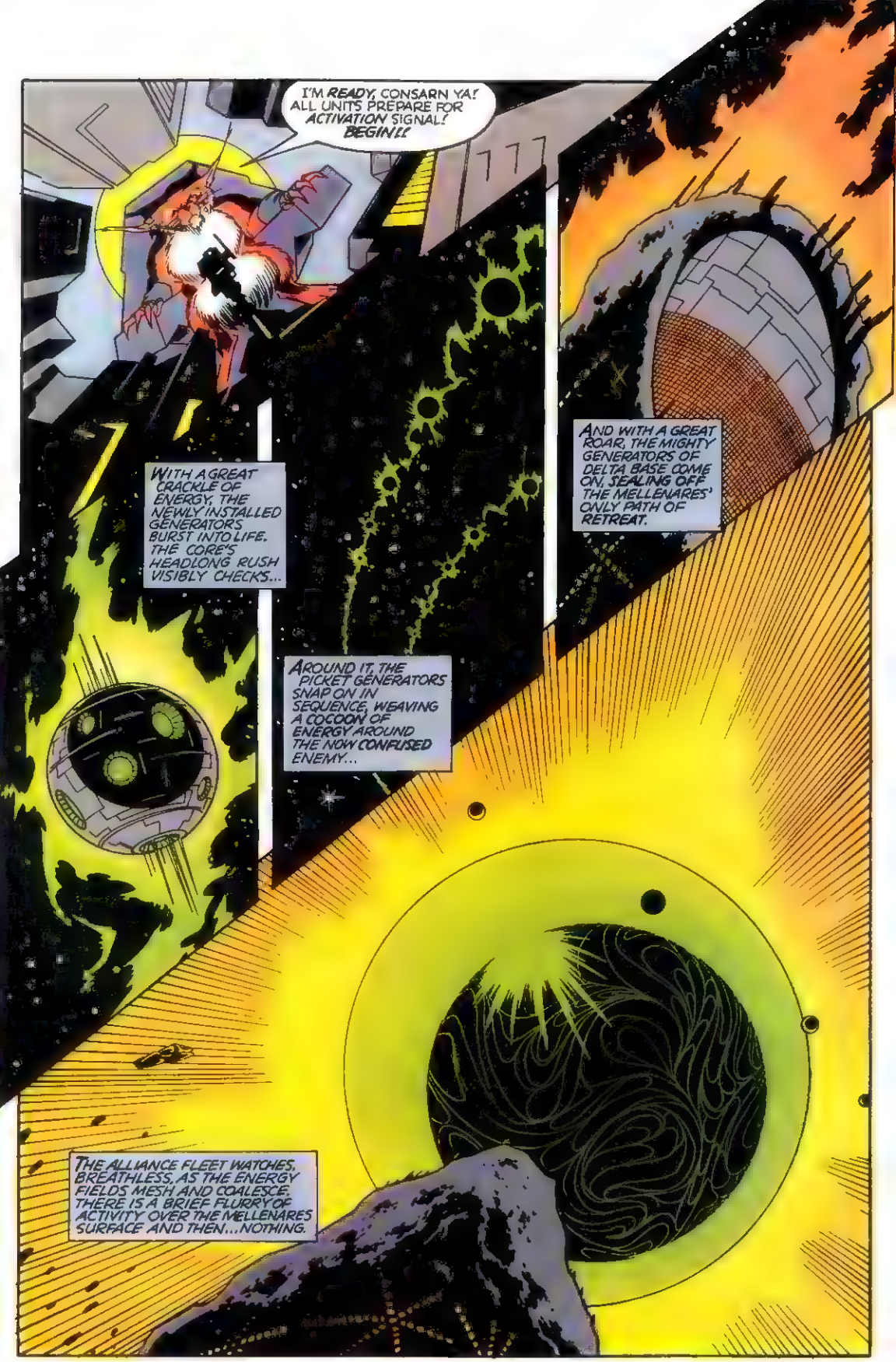
GENERAL! THE MELLENARES APPEAR TO BE ACCELERATING!
WARNING! WE HAVE AN UNAUTHORIZED INTRUSION FROM HYPERSPACE!
"IT'S DYNAMO JOE AND WOLF-T!"
WHITE WOMAN PROTECT US! WE'VE RE-ENTERED NORMAL SPACE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MELLENARES FLEET!

ACCORDING TO THE LEOPARD'S CREW, THEY BLOCKED ANOTHER MELENARES' FEINT INTO HYPERSPACE--THE ENEMY IS SPREAD OUT TOO THINLY!
WE MUST FORCE THEM TO REGROUP! A FULL FRONTAL ATTACK IS REQUIRED--NOW!
DA! PRINCE SHAETON--THE FIELD IS YOURS!
AND FOR PERHAPS THE FINAL TIME, THE VAST ALLIANCE FLEET SURGES FORWARD, PAINFULLY AWARE THAT THIS COULD BE THEIR LAST CHANCE OF STOPPING THE ENEMY IN THEIR LIFETIMES!
ALL UNITS--
ATTACK!!!


HEY, SPECTRE SQUADRON! MIND IF LION SQUADRON TAGS ALONG WITH YOU GUYS?
SURE, C'MON! I DON'T FIGURE THE SARGE'LL BE TOO PICKY ABOUT WHO SAVES HIS 'BOT!
"AS LONG AS HE'S STILL AROUND TO GRIPE ABOUT IT!"
HOLD ON--I'M SHORT-CIRCUITING OUR SHIELD GENERATOR. IT'LL BURN OUT OUR FUEL CELLS, BUT IT'LL IONIZE OUR HULL!
HA! THEY DIDN'T LIKE THAT! THEY'RE BACKING OFF!
ONLY TO GET A BETTER SHOT--LET'S KICK IN OUR RESERVES AND GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

YAHOO!
WAY TO GO, SARGE! WE'LL SPREAD OUT AND FORCE 'EM TO RE-GROUP!
HOPELESS ROMANTIC! LOOK OUT BEHIND YOU!
WHAT? LADY OF SPACE!
TOO LATE! WE'RE TRAPPED!
WAITAMINUTE! I'LL DO WHAT THE SARGE JUST DID!
NO! I DIDN'T DISENGAGE THE CIRCUIT BREAKERS!!
EEEYAAAGGG!


A WORTHY EFFORT... BUT TOO SLOW.
SPECTRE SQUADRON--ASSUME A DEFENSIVE DIAMOND AND REGROUP!
ALL COMBAT UNITS RETURN TO BASE! THE ENEMY HAS REGROUPED!
THEIR TASK DONE, THE ARMORED SWARM HEADS BACK TO SAFETY...
...AS THE FINAL PLAYERS IN TODAY'S GAME RISE TO TAKE THEIR PLACES.
ALL UNITS ARE IN POSITION, CONTROL, ARE YOU READY?


I'M READY, CONSARN YA! ALL UNITS PREPARE FOR ACTIVATION SIGNAL! BEGIN!!
WITH A GREAT CRACKLE OF ENERGY, THE NEWLY INSTALLED GENERATORS BURST INTO LIFE. THE CORE'S HEADLONG RUSH VISIBLY CHECKS...
AROUND IT, THE PICKET GENERATORS SNAP ON IN SEQUENCE, WEAVING A COCOON OF ENERGY AROUND THE NOW CONFUSED ENEMY...
AND WITH A GREAT ROAR, THE MIGHTY GENERATORS OF DELTA BASE COME ON, SEALING OFF THE MELLENARES' ONLY PATH OF RETREAT.
THE ALLIANCE FLEET WATCHES, BREATHLESS, AS THE ENERGY FIELDS MESH AND COALESCE. THERE IS A BRIEF FLURRY OF ACTIVITY OVER THE MELLENARES SURFACE AND THEN...NOTHING.

THE MELLENARES HAVE BEEN CAPTURED.
WE HAVE THEM!
WELL AH'LL BE SPIN-DRIED... IT WORKED!
THE ORION WAR IS OVER!
Hmmm-- I WONDER... IS IT?
NOW WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THEM?
WHAT, INDEED?

WE DID IT!! WE FOUGHT THEM, CAPTURED THEM AND LIVED TO SING THE TALE!! AND YOU, ELANIAN DARO-- YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT!
Uh... ALL IN A DAY'S WORK, COMMANDER
HSSSSFT!
I CAN OFFER YOU THAT EXCITEMENT...
HA! ADMIT IT, SERGEANT, YOU THRIVE ON THE EXCITEMENT OF BATTLE! YOU MAY CRAVE PEACE NOW, BUT YOU WILL SOON DISCOVER THE TEPID MEAL THAT IT MAKES TO A TRUE WARRIOR!
YOU--OR THE BLOOD NATION?
WE CAN TALK OF THE BROTHERHOOD LATER... BUT I AM HERE NOW.
Murff!
YOO-HOO! SARGE!
WELL, THAT'S A GOOD START...
NEXT: SHADOW OF THE WOLF!

Dear Tabby

C/O FIRST COMICS
435 N. LASALLE
CHICAGO IL 60610

Hey Rick,

I just read Dynamo Joe #9. It was terrific! When I read the lettercol I got upset (sniff, sniff). How can you get rid of the Cargonauts!!! What about us Cargonaut lovers!!!!! Please decide to keep the Cargonauts in the last few pages of Dynamo Joe or put them in their own series.

James Kovacs
24560 Knollwood Street
Novi, Michigan 48050

Dear Dynamic Ones,

Just as the Cargonauts feature really gets interesting, you decide to cancel it! Now, I can't say that I'm exactly upset about the prospect of full length Dynamo Joe stories beginning in a couple of issues, but I wouldn't mind having the Cargonauts stick around, either.

Ironically, at least some of my increased enthusiasm for the back-up feature is due to the fact that it has begun to tie in more closely with DJ. In #9, of course, we see Daro join the cast and thus get a different viewpoint on this most fascinating character. In addition, we get a closer look at the Imperium itself. All of this helps to add some background and depth to the lead feature.

In addition, the storyline continues to improve in quality, with more intrigue apparent and more hijinks promised (or, at least, hoped for!). I am wondering how you can close it off within two issues and still do justice to the potentials that have been generated so far. We'll see.

Dynamo Joe? Oh, him! The enigma of the aliens continues to unravel — and in a most entertaining way. It was good to see the Tavitans receiving some prominence within the Alliance. However, I'd like some explanation for the effectiveness of their "instincts." It can't just be blind luck, can it?! (That's how they seem to treat it — i.e. they don't seem to "cultivate" it in any way.)

In the lettercol, Mike Rawdon says that I "seem to be cracking up." Why, Mike! That's the nicest thing that anyone's said to me in months! After all, it does imply that at one time I was completely sane! (And that's something that certain people seem unwilling to concede...)

P.S. Is it just a coincidence or is the combination of the "Star of Milwaukee" and the shuttle craft on page 1 of the back-up story *supposed* to look like a blender?! Come to think of it, the Khan's HQ looks a lot like an upside-down coffee filter... What is this: a comic book or a home appliance catalogue?! ("Earn money in your spare time! Sell books of exciting adventures and valuable home conveniences!")

P.P.S. And Mike Rawdon thought I was cracking up!

T.M. Maple
Box 1272, Station B
Weston, Ontario
M9L 2R9 Canada

Sometimes you just can't win. We thought everybody would love the new expanded ***Dynamo Joe****, and now it turns out there's a bunch of closet Cargonauts fans out there! Well, maybe we'll bring them back some time.*

In fact, we've got this idea for a story where giant toasters from the Crab Nebula join forces with a fleet of intergalactic refugee vegomatics...

Dear Joe People,

Today I went to get comics. As it happens, I found that I only had three waiting for me at my dealer, and decided that with such a paltry amount I might go into withdrawal. Staring at me from the rack was Dynamo Joe #9. "Well, hey!" I figured, "It's by First Comics, and they do Badger, Hawkmoon, Elric, and that Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Graphic Novel!" all of which are books I read. (Incidentally I have issues 4-25 inclusive of Badger and it is one of the best books out, never a bad issue!) Well, I bought Joe and guess what? Now I've got another title to buy every month! The overall art is good, and the art on the robots is mind-boggling. Even the Cargonauts installment was tolerable. (I loathe the Clonezone trash in the back of The Badger. It's like using Madonna to fill up the last five minutes of a tape of Beethoven! Yes, that means get rid of it immediately!!!)

Eventually, I found myself reading the letter section in the back. "Dear Mr. Foglio and Company," said the first letter. "Foglio! Phil Foglio!?!" exclaimed I. I immediately turned to the title page: "script: Phil Foglio" it read. "I'm hooked for life!!" screamed I. I first saw his work in *Dragon Magazine* (well actually I saw it in a space joke-book, but didn't realize it until sometime later). About a year ago, when I was in the same dilemma as today — not enough comics — I was looking through some of my dealers older comics, where I saw *Myth-Adventures* #1. I promptly bought it, soon followed by the rest of the series, and all of the books by Robert Asprin. All of which I love.

I don't know if you want to hear this kind of thing, but I just finished *The Belgariad*, by David Eddings. Considering what incredible jobs you did on Michael Moorcock's books, I think that you should do a comic adaptation of *The Belgariad*, although I won't be the least bit surprised if you don't, considering how long it is. But please, if you do, have Phil Foglio script it; however, certainly do *not* have him do the art!!

Sorry I can't contribute a little constructive criticism, but I'm sure you don't mind all that much. Keep up the great work.

P.S. Doug Rice should make some Dynamo Joe Posters. I'd buy 'em.

Danny Meltz
RD #1 Box 437
Newton, NJ 07860

Actually, Doug already made a ***DJ*** *poster. They weren't in - tended for sale; but maybe your local retailer has one lying around.*

As for your comments about Clonezone, it just so happens I devoted the entire lettercol in ***Badger*** *this month to letters, pro and con, about the Zone. Read the fascinating truth in* ***Badger*** *#28. Lots of folks actually like the Zone — which is more than I knew about Cargonauts before we cancelled it!*

Dear Mr. Rice,

It was not a very nice thing for you to do. I was going along nicely, reading Grimjack and not bothering anyone, when you go and put a guest appearance by Dynamo Joe in #30. Now I have to buy another comic every month. And I already buy over seventy titles a month. Not to mention the fact that I am going crazy trying to find all of Joe's prior appearances. I just happen to already own Mars, but I cannot seem to find the mini-series. In case you have not figured it out yet, I like Dynamo Joe. I thought that it was just another giant robot, but I now know that it is much more.

You have been doing a good job of showing the political and economic intrigues that would result from a galaxy-wide civil - ization. And you have made me curious as to just what the Khan is up to. And how about a look at the Tavitan homeworld. I am sure that it would be interesting, to say the least.

Question: If the Mellenares in #9 were turning into a new core because it was cut off from the old one, then if the Alliance succeeds in destroying the old core, will that not result in all Mellenares growing into cores? Will this result in the Mellenares fighting among themselves, or will they all become self-sustaining and independent? This could be fun to watch. But I am glad I will not be there.

I hope that you will continue to reveal more about Daro's and Pomru's background. They are both fascinating characters. It is really too bad that one of them is going to die. But that is part of war.

I am also sorry to hear that Cargonauts will be leaving the back-up slot. I have enjoyed the adventures of the "Star of Milwaukee"and her crew a great deal. But at least it means that Joe will get more pages. Just do not forget about Clanton and the others. They are too much fun to leave sitting unused for long. Time for me to get back to waiting for the next issue. Take care.

Tom Brincefield
Box 105
Bridgewater College
Bridgewater, VA 22812

Dear Phil, Doug & Co.,

Do you mind if I kibbitz on a few technical points?

1) In First Adventures #4-5, a human being, minus pressure suit or other protective gear, is shown occupying a breached airlock — and not only survives, but is able to speak in vacuum! Come on guys. Even "Lost in Space" wouldn't fall for that one. May we assume that the Mellenares were somehow maintaining an atmosphere for the benefit of the "invisible" specimen it was seeking to study?

2) The Mellenares' "obsessive straight-line sub-light trajectory": Since the Melenares first appeared at the galactic rim, a sub-light velocity would not place Terra in danger for at least several centuries (I can't be sure without my presently misplaced galactic atlas, but we're at least 1,000 light-years from the rim.) This is not to mention the tactical advantages a hyper-light fleet would have in battling a sub-light foe ("Okay, we'll take them from the front, you guys warp in behind them, and we'll sandwich them between us.") May we retroactively substitute "Hyper-Light" for "sub-light" in all past issues?

3) On a more nit-picking note, I would call the Tavitan's odd method of information-processing "intuition" rather than "instinct." An instinct is a genetically-programmed robot response to a familiar situation, while intuition is the ability to subconsciously correlate and analyze data faster than the rational mind is capable. As Randall Garett put it, it is "the ability to jump from an unwarranted assumption to a foregone conclusion without covering the space between." Sort of the psychic equivalent of warp-drive.

And just so you don't think I'm entirely negative, I like Joe's latest "Face-Lift" — it gives him a hint of expression without being as silly-looking as his original Mona Lisa smile.

Robert Ortega
2601 Cortex Drive #11
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Rather than make up my answers as I go, I decided to ask the expert this time, ***DJ*** *creator* ***Doug Rice****. According to Doug, the "galactic rim" in the* ***DJ*** *universe is defined as the edge of the "civilized" galaxy. So it's really much closer to Terra than you thought.*

As for outflanking the enemy by use of FTL technology, that's what the Alliance tried in the "Rim Battle Massacre" referred to way back in the ***Dynamo Joe Special****. But now that the Mellenares have mastered FTL drive, the sub-light/hyper-light difference is no longer a factor.*

Finally, instinct vs. intuition. You're absolutely right. We goofed. But since I don't feel like recalling thousands of comics, manually crossing out "instinct," and writing in "intuition," I think we'll just let it stand. Okay?

NEXT MONTH: Pomru discovers the true origin of Wolf-1 in "A Wolf in the Fold," by **Phil Foglio**, **Ben Dunn**, and **Brian Thomas**. —Rick Oliver

FIRST NOTES

My recent ramblings about ratings systems seem to have generated some interesting reader response. So this month I thought I'd answer one particular letter that explores the issue in some depth. My apologies in advance for not running the the entire letter; but, hey, we've only got one page here.

Dear Mr. Oliver:

You state that First has a set of "guidelines" that prevent any "vulgarity" or "bad taste" from entering your comics. You claim to have no "ratings system" appearing on your comics' covers, and yet your "guidelines" could potentially have the same effect on your creative people as a ratings system would.

Your guidelines forbid, at least by implication, profanity, swearing, explicit sexual material or graphic violence, since none of these can be found on network television. First does not allow such material to appear in any of its books because, you imply, that such material automatically reduces a book to the above-mentioned vulgarity and/or bad taste. I have a great deal of difficulty with this view. To my mind, a good, intelligent comic may include any of these if it is necessary in the context of the story, and not merely gratuitous, and the comic would not degrade itself. Suppose that Howard Chaykin came to you and said that he wished to depict a graphic rape scene in a story in order to fully show what a brutal, disgusting act this is. According to your guidelines, you would forbid this.

This would be wrong. By doing this, you would be, in effect, altering the creative person's vision. You would be, in effect, degrading the work because it is no longer expressing your creative people's intent as to what it should represent. Instead, it would represent your, or Rick Obadiah's, personal view of what comics should be.

I collect many of your comics, and it would be hard for me to continue to buy your books if I thought you had interferred with the intentions of the creative people working on these titles. I greatly admire the work of Mike Baron, Steve Rude, Mike Grell, Howard Chaykin, et al, and want to be secure that I am reading the full expression of their ideas, not those that they figure First would allow past its "guidelines," and certainly not those filtered through your personal views.

Steven Birnie
391 Belsize Drive
Toronto, Ontario

You raise some interesting points, Steven; but you also make a lot of mistaken inferences. First of all, I never stated or meant to imply that our guidelines prevent vulgarity or bad taste from appearing in our books. Ultimately, those are judgments made in the mind of the individual reader. Our guidelines assure distributors, retailers, and consumers that our comics adhere to certain basic standards — kind of like knowing that when you pick up a copy of Newsweek, you won't open it to find a centerfold of naked ladies, St. Bernards and a vat of Wesson oil.

More importantly, our guidelines are nothing new; they have been in effect since our very first issue of our first title was published, almost five years ago. Whether or not these guidelines coincide with my "personal views" is irrelevant. These guidelines were determined by mutual agreement between the people who created this company. Everyone who chooses to bring their creative energies to First knows the ground rules going in. They are not arbitrarily imposed ex post facto.

Which brings me to my second point: publishing is a cooperative venture. Few comics are the expression of a single individual. Frequently there is a writer, a penciller, an inker, a letterer, a colorist, and finally, an editor. All these people work together. We work with our creative people to produce the best books we possibly can.

Finally, these guidelines only apply to our regular monthly and bi-monthly series. If Howard Chaykin, or anyone else, "wished to depict a graphic rape scene," in the context of a graphic novel, it is theoretically possible that we would go along with it. Personally, I might consider it offensive as hell; but it would not be within the scope of my position to "forbid" it. It would, however, be my responsibility to question the necessity of such a scene and to ask the creator to consider alternatives. To do any less would be a disservice to the creator, the public, and all the other products bearing the First logo.

— Rick Oliver

American Flagg! #45: Reuben returns to Chicago to avenge the death of Mandy Krieger. But first he has to help acting mayor and acting chief ranger Medea Blitz find out what stopped the food shipments from the Plex — and quell the riots by starving citizens that threaten to destroy the PlexMall and the city! By **Marc DeMatteis** and **Mark Badger**.

Badger #28: Badger gets hold of some "bad beer" and wakes up to find his alter-ego Pierre has taken over! Meanwhile, the legendary Yeti is being chased by a mythical demon conjured by IBOB. By **Mike Baron** and **Bill Reinhold**. Deluxe series.

Dynamo Joe #12: The Alliance plans to capture the entire Mellenares fleet intact — but are they prepared to battle the enemy... in hyperspace? It may take a miracle to stop the Mellenares now — or maybe just Wolf-1. By **Phil Foglio**, **Doug Rice** and **Brian Thomas**. Now book-length adventures every month in a Deluxe series.

Elric: The Vanishing Tower #2: Continuing the adaptation of **Michael Moorcock's** novel. Elric, the sworn servant of Chaos, accepts a task for Law's sake — to recover a gem that can dispel any enchantment. By **Roy Thomas** and **Jan Duursema**. Deluxe, bi-monthly series.

Grimjack #39: Is it really "The Return of John Gaunt?" Grimjack is dead and buried. But there are those in Cynosure who would use his *body* to ruin everything that was close to Gaunt — starting with his best friend! Can anyone stop the onslaught of an *undead* Grimjack? By **John Ostrander** and **Tom Mandrake**. And Munden's Bar by **Will Shetterly** and **Gordon Purcell**.

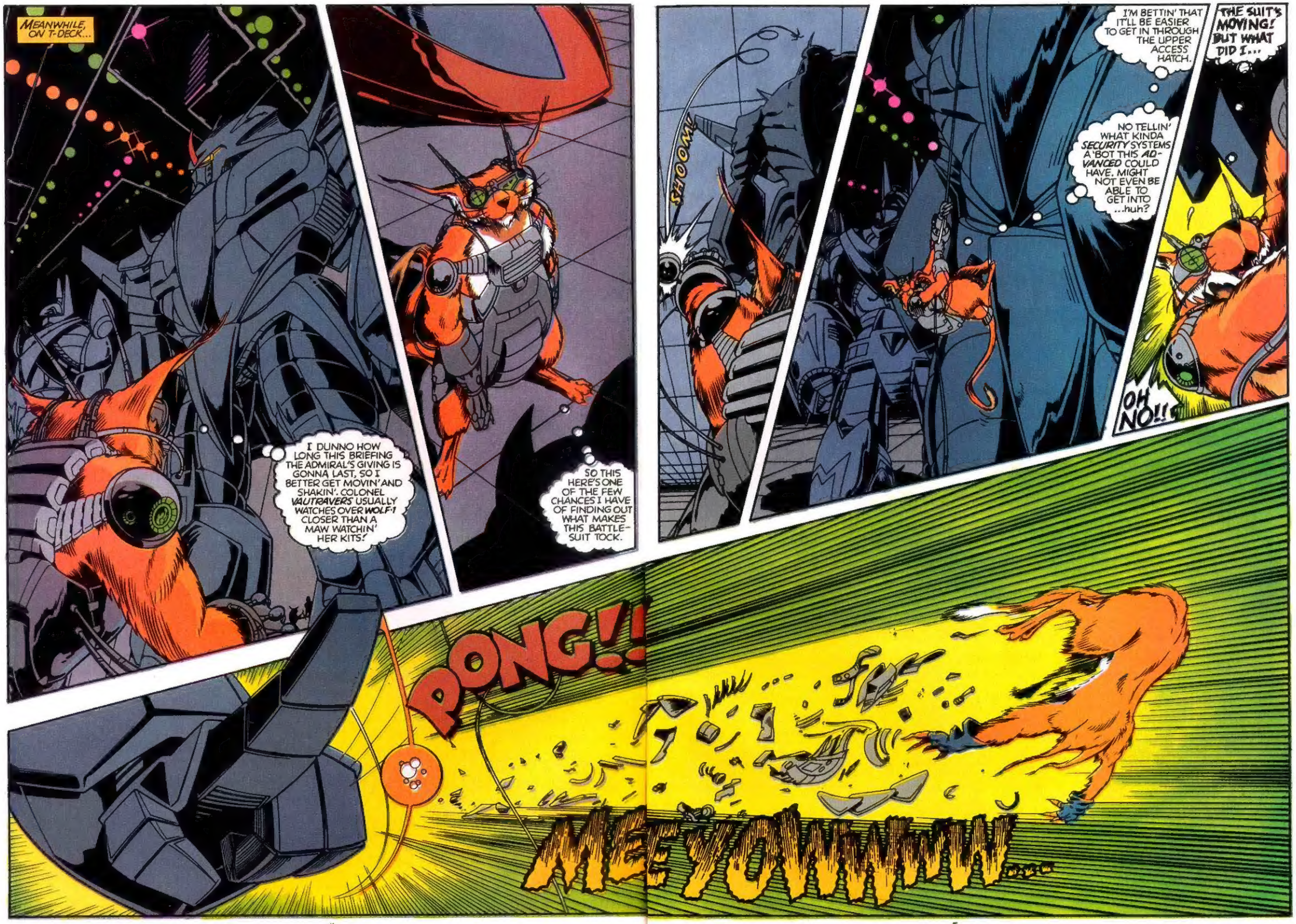
Jon Sable, Freelance #52: Sable's lost both his new client *and* Eden Kendall's son. Jon was supposed to be "babysitting," but Adam had other ideas. Now both kids are about to be found — and not by Sable! By **Mike Grell**, **George Booker** and **Val Mayerik**. Deluxe series.

Lone Wolf and Cub #2: Only the infant Daigoro — the Lone Wolf's cub — stands between his unconscious, defenseless father and an army of assassins determined to destroy the Lone Wolf. By **Kazuo Koike** and **Goseki Kojima**. Cover and introduction by **Frank Miller**. 64 pages. Black-and-white.

Nexus #37: Guest artist **Paul Smith** joins writer **Mike Baron** for a book-length adventure as Nexus returns to Chernenko to visit the "Priest." But religion has been outlawed on Chernenko, and the Sovs have no love for the "liberator" from Ylum. Deluxe Series.

Shatter #11: Shatter has the RNA of hundreds of experts in a wide variety of disciplines coursing through his brain. But he's also got a nose for trouble — that leads him right into a war for control of Daley City! By **Peter B. Gillis** and **Charlie Athanas**. Deluxe, bi-monthly series.

Whisper #9: The Conclusion to "City of Angels" as Cody Wyoming finds out more than he wanted to know about Diane Young; the Yakuza and the Mafia find out more than they wanted to know about their Bolivian partners, and Whisper takes on Carnicero, the head of the Bolivian drug smuggling empire! By **Steven Grant** and **Norm Breyfogle**. Now a Deluxe, bi-monthly series.


MEANWHILE, ON T-DECK...
I DUNNO HOW LONG THIS BRIEFING THE ADMIRAL'S GIVING IS GONNA LAST, SO I BETTER GET MOVIN' AND SHAKIN'. COLONEL VAULTRAVERS USUALLY WATCHES OVER WOLF-1 CLOSER THAN A MAW WATCHIN' HER KITS!
SO THIS HERE'S ONE OF THE FEW CHANCES I HAVE OF FINDING OUT WHAT MAKES THIS BATTLE-SUIT TOCK.
SHOOM!
I'M BETTIN' THAT IT'LL BE EASIER TO GET IN THROUGH THE UPPER ACCESS HATCH.
NO TELLIN' WHAT KINDA SECURITY SYSTEMS A 'BOT THIS ADVANCED COULD HAVE. MIGHT NOT EVEN BE ABLE TO GET INTO ...huh?
THE SUIT'S MOVING! BUT WHAT DID I...
OH NO!!
RONG!!
METAMORPHOSIS